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ABSTRACT

Research indicating a strong correlation between reading and writing skills has been used to create effective teaching activities; this paper summarizes research findings and describes teaching activities in three classrooms. (1) As students' reading comprehension and recall have been shown to improve following instruction in summary writing, a sixth grade class discussed a reading selection, listed important ideas, and created summary statements of the content. Students then heard and critiqued these statements. (2) In conjunction with a unit on "wild creatures," a second grade class created animal riddles and organized data on specific animals into charts. They then organized that information into reports, had peer and teacher conferences on their writing, and had revised and edited reports bound into individual books. (3) Analysis of the structure of basal reader stories served as a basis for student writing in a fourth grade class. Although more research is needed on the relationship between reading and writing, extending the activities in a reading group to include discussion of content, writing, and responding to what is written enhances both reading and writing skills. (MM)

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TEACHING WRITING AS AN EXTENSION OF THE DIRECTED READING ACTIVITY

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In Jan Wilson's second grade, the students in one reading group were sharing the riddles they had written describing one of the wild animals they had read about in their basal reader selection. The riddles summarized what each student had learned about his/her chosen animal.

The students in a reading group in Alma Lakin's sixth grade were taking turns reading their one-sentence summaries of material under each of the section headings of a selection they had read about penguins. After two or three had read a summary sentence, there followed a discussion of which one had done the best job of keeping it short and at the same time keeping the essence of the content.

In Ed Thompson's fourth grade, each student in a reading group read an original how-and-why story she/he had written. When each finished, the other students told the reader what they liked about the story and made suggestions as to what could be added or changed to make the story better.

All of these teachers were using what they know about the reading and writing process to teach both reading and writing skills. Each of these activities was done in a reading group as an extension of the directed reading activity.

Current concern for students' deficiencies in writing ability has prompted elementary schools to look critically at the status given to writing instruction. Shanahan (1979) questioned elementary teachers

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regarding how much time they spend in teaching writing. Responses indicated that generally an insignificant amount of time is allocated to it. The bulk of time designated for language arts instruction in the elementary grades is typically given to reading. Teachers reported that pressures to improve reading instruction were so great they were afraid reading performance would suffer if they gave much time to teaching writing.

Since both reading and writing are language processes, we can assume that there are relationships between them. The exact nature of these relationships, however, is not clear. A large body of research has been devoted to investigating the reading process and the various approaches to teaching reading, particularly at elementary levels. Research in writing instruction in elementary grades has received less attention and, until recently, focused mainly on teaching methods. Studies that identify the specific commonalities of reading and writing performance have been sparce and sporadic. If it is possible to identify common elements in reading and writing, instruction in the two might be integrated or, at least, related with mutual benefits.

The purpose of this paper is to summarize findings from studies of reading and writing relationships carried out with elementary school children and to suggest teaching activities based on this research.

Research on Reading and Writing Relationships

Stotsky (1983) has presented a comprehensive review of the research on reading and writing relationships. Additional recent studies, either correlational or experimental, have also been reported.

Stotsky (1983) summarized the results of studies where reading achievement was correlated with writing ability with the following:

> To summarize briefly, the correlational studies show almost consistently that better writers tend to be better readers (of their own writing as well as of other reading material), that better writers tend to read more than poorer writers, and that better readers tend to produce more syntactically mature writing than poorer readers (p. 636).

In addition, Chall and Jacobs (1983) reported a study in reading and writing performance among low socioeconomic status children in which they found developmental trends parallel on almost all tests.

Stotsky's (1983) report included only a few experimental studies relating reading and writing instruction in grades one through six. Notable among those reported were studies where fifth and sixth grade students' reading comprehension and recall improved when they were taught summary writing. Also in a longitudinal study cited by Stotsky (Mills, 1974), fourth graders who since first grade had listened to or read and then discussed children's literature with follow-up writing activities improved in their free writing.

In addition to the experimental studies reported by Stotsky, Flemming (1982) described the writing instruction she provided as part of a reading improvement program for second and fourth graders. This program was in addition to the classroom developmental reading program. Significant gains were made in oral and silent reading test scores and writing improved as well.

One of the techniques Flemming (1982) used with the second graders was to read to them the entire works of an author. She stated as follows:

> After each reading I asked the students what they thought of the story and insisted that they cite

> specifics to support their responses. I wanted the students to use the readings as models for good writing techniques and to be aware of the elements of good writing (p. 94).

After reading Else Minarik's Little Bear books, for example, the students on their own suggestion wrote their personal adventures but used Little Bear as the main character to mimic Minarik's writing style.

Another technique Flemming (1982) used was to schedule time each day when students could write anything they wished. All writings were kept in their individual folders. Students were invited to share their writings in regularly scheduled student-teacher conferences where the student read his/her piece of writing and she observed the decoding skills, content and organization of the writing, the sound-symbol associations in the spelling, and the mechanics. She praised what the students did correctly, expressed an interest in the content, and asked questions to point to the need for detail, organization, and clarity. Finally, she asked what the student planned to do next with the piece of writing. Would they file it in their folders, revise, or have a group conference where fellow students could offer suggestions for further revision which might lead to publication? The publishing methods used were usually the production of books, but sometimes the writings were posted on the bulletin boards, featured in the school newspaper, or read in school assemblies or in other classrooms (p. 95).

Instruction which Relates Reading and Writing

Since commonalities in reading and writing do exist, how can recognition of these commonalities be used in planning instruction that will develop

abilities in both processes?

The usual directed reading activity as presented in most basal reading programs includes the following steps:

- Preparation for reading when students are presented with background information and vocabulary needed for reading and understanding the selection. Purposes for reading the selection are set.

- Silent reading where students either read the selection in its entirety without interruption or their reading is guided by breaking the selection into managable parts, and questions are posed to help the reader follow the content of the storyline.

- Story discussion where students are questioned about the storyline and encouraged to cite specifics to support their responses. The discussion is directed toward achieving the purposes set for reading the story.

- Skills instruction when attention is given to teaching specific decoding, comprehension, and study skills which have been designated for a given selection.

- Interrelated activities for extending and enriching the students' experiences with the selection, such as literature appreciation activities.

The steps to follow for writing instruction are not laid out in such a mechanical way as are those for reading instruction. In recent years, the research by Graves and Associates (Graves, 1983; Calkins, 1980 and 1983) on writing process and the literature generated from the Bay Area Writing Project and other similar state and regional writing projects have provided teachers with descriptions for an approach to writing instruction which follows a workshop-type cycle as follows:

- Prewriting or rehearsal when students go through the process of selecting a topic, thinking and talking about the topic, and if necessary, collecting information about the topic.

- Drafting and redrafting when the piece of writing takes shape.

- Revising when students conference with their teachers and/or peers to ask for suggestions on what to add, how to change the

focus or organization, how to refine and correct previous drafts.

- Editing when the attention is focused on the mechanics of writing.

Throughout the writing process the first focus is on content, getting down what you want to say. Later, attention is given to the mechanics or conventions of writing.

Since research indicates that learning how to write summaries of what is read improves both reading comprehension and writing skills, how can this process be included in the directed reading activity and, at the same time, be a part of the writing workshop? That is what Alma Lakin was doing with her sixth graders. As the students discussed the material under each of the section headings of the selection they read about penguins, she listed on the chalkboard the major ideas in a word or phrase. When the discussion was completed, she challenged the students to write these ideas into summary statements. Students then critiqued each one's work.

Likewise, Jan Wilson's second graders had discussed a selection on wild animals according to the plan of the directed reading activity. As students described each animal, she listed words and phrases on the chalkboard. The selection was written from a third person's (the author) point of view. To introduce the students to writing from another point of view, she suggested that each student assume the role of a different animal. Using words and phrases that were descriptive of the animal they chose to be, the students wrote riddles in first person, ending them with "Who am I?" The next day, each student read her/his riddle. After listening to each riddle, the students told the writers what words they used that helped

them recognize the animal. In some cases, the students suggested other words that could be added or substituted to make the riddle more clear. Finally, the riddles were collected and bound into a riddle book about animals for other students to read.

Jan Wilson continued to plan time for writing as part of the directed reading activities for the unit "Wild Creatures." One of the reading skills taught in the unit was how to get information from a simple data chart. Mrs. Wilson wanted to show students how useful data charts can be. On completing the unit, the students discussed the facts they had learned about a number of animals. They agreed that most of the facts fit into such categories as (1) what the animal looks like, (2) where it lives, (3) what it eats, (4) something about the babies, and (5) who its enemies are. Since some of the information in the selections did not fit any of these categories, one student suggested they add a category for any unusual characteristics about the animal.

This summarizing and categorizing provided rehearsal for another writing activity. Once again, the students chose one animal to write about. Mrs. Wilson gave each student a blank data chart arranged to accommodate the large handwriting of most second graders.

[Insert Figure 1 here]

The students filled in the data charts with information they had read in the basal reader about their chosen animal. They went to the library, read from other sources, and collected additional facts to add to the appropriate category on their data charts. Finally, each student put all of his/her information together and drafted a report.

Figure 1. Data Chart for Recording Facts

Facts for My Report Name of animal _____	
What it looks like.	
Where it lives.	
What it eats.	
Something about the babies.	
Who its enemies are.	
Any unusual characteristics.	
List sources of information	

By conferencing with their peers and their teacher, they redrafted, revised, and edited interesting informational pieces of writing. These finished manuscripts were typed and bound into sturdy book covers by an adult volunteer so that each student produced her/his own book to be read by others.

Despite the criticism of the contents of basal readers, most of the current series contain a sampling of a variety of types of quality literature for children. Time scheduled for discussing the content of a well-written selection could well be extended to help students become aware of the elements of good writing as well as acquaint them with what structures define different types of discourse. Starting with simple narration, students begin to form and recognize a predictable structure for stories that helps them anticipate events and outcomes (Sadow, 1982). This sense of story structure influences the types of discourse students choose for creating their own stories. For example, units that include traditional literary forms such as folk and fairy tales, fables, and the like are included in most of the basal reading series. Background information on the literary form is often included in the teacher's manual as well as suggested procedures for acquainting students with how a given story form is structured.

It was this kind of unit that one of Ed Thompson's fourth grade reading groups was completing when they wrote their how-and-why stories. A discussion of the characteristics of a how-and-why story initiated pre-writing and rehearsal for students to draft their own stories. By sharing their drafts of original stories with each other in the reading group,

the students used the feedback from their peers to revise their stories to produce a finished piece. Editing under the guidance of the teacher followed. Finally, the stories were typed, illustrated, and bound in book covers so they could be read by others.

When students feel confident about their ability to read, they need little or no encouragement to select books and stories to read independently in addition to those read in directed reading activities. The same is true of writing. Periodic directed writing activities that are done in connection with reading help students become aware of the similarities and the differences in the two processes. Such activities can also provide the structure that some students need prior to striking out on their own. Certainly, participation in either reading or writing is not limited to the time scheduled for directed reading/writing activities. Time can be provided when each takes place independently using self-selected material for reading and self-selected topics for writing.

Conclusion

Additional research is needed to produce more conclusive evidence regarding the exact nature of reading and writing relationships. In addition, the extent to which combining instruction in reading and writing will result in better performance in both areas will require a thorough experimental testing over time of a well-developed program. None of the experimental studies reported indicate that reading should be completely taught by writing activities or writing completely taught by reading activities. There are, however, possible ways to enhance each by extending the activities in a reading group to include opportunities for students to talk about what is read, to write, and to respond to what is written.

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